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ABSTRACT

The rate of the change now occurring outside of community colleges has made long-range planning an especially difficult task. Futures research, which attempts to forecast future scenarios by studying societal, econcmic, and demographic trends, can be used effectively to facilitate the institutional planning process by anticipating both internal and external changes. Forecasting can be valuable only if it is communicated to relevant decision makers, if the decision makers believe the forecast, and if there are resources available to act on the information provided. Given the normal resistance to change encountered within institutions, futures research can only be successful if the human element of the organization is considered first. Anticipating change and finding the roots of resistance to change are first steps in coping with change--a transitional process that concludes with a "new beginning"--and in eventually embracing change. Futures research can assist in this process by helping members of an institution recognize "endings," prepare for the future, and collaborate in planning for the future with a sense of greater control over the changes that are likely to occur. Futures research can also be used to answer questions about the likely impact of various issues already facing community colleges today, specifically, issues related to: societal trends; changes in the community colleges student population; community college faculty; financial resources; facilities and technology; accountability; and leadership. Implementing a futures research approach to planning will require linking, planning, research, and professional development. A 45-item bibliography is included. (PAA)

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Planning in the 90's for Community Colleges: Coping with Rapid Change by Linking Futures Research with Professional Development

1991

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Planning in the 90's for Community Colleges:
Coping with Rapid Change by Linking Futures Research with Professional Development

At one time it might have been possible to develop a solid "five-year plan" for an institution based around two basic questions: "Where have we been?"; and "Where do we want to go?" It was assumed that outside changes which affected the institution were occurring at a pace that would allow such a five-year plan to be successfully implemented. However, today the pace of change has increased to a point which makes it difficult for institutions to make any solid plans for next month, much less next year.

In particular, community colleges have been at the front lines in attempting to respond to rapid societal changes. Community colleges are charged with the responsibility of serving the educational needs of the local community. In addition, community colleges are expected to provide open access to the first two years of a college education regardless of students' academic qualifications. The very nature of these missions dictates that community colleges must be responsive to change in order to continue to provide a valuable educational service

It is difficult, however, for community colleges to respond to rapid change quickly and effectively unless they have developed the ability to anticipate change. One of the major goals of institutional research and planning is to anticipate changes so that planning is strategic in addressing future challenges. Futures research which attempts to forecast future scenarios can be used to effectively facilitate the planning process by anticipating both internal and external changes. Although it is impossible to predict the future with 100 percent accuracy, by studying societal, economic, and demographic trends it is possible to envision scenarios to which the institution could develop potential responses.

But are individuals within the community college willing to respond to change? This paper presents the argument that futures research may be successfully used by community colleges in responding to rapid changes, only if the human element of the organization is considered first so that natural resistance to change is addressed and dealt with in a positive manner. To implement a futures research approach to planning, community college leaders must understand the links

between futures research, the planning process, and professional development which addresses the human side of change.

This paper is presented in four parts. First, the relationship of futures research to the goals and functions of institutional research and planning is examined. The second section examines the relationship of human responses to change and decision-making in the institution. Next, issues facing community colleges will be examined from a futures research perspective, and potential research tasks will be addressed. And finally, implementing a futures research approach to planning will be discussed, including methods which may be used to link the goals and outcomes of research and planning with professional development activities which help people to cope with change and future challenges.

The Relationship of Futures Research to the Goals and Functions of Research and Planning

What are the goals and functions of research and planning? The broad goal of planning is to help decision makers to make better decisions, taking into account a multitude of internal and external variables, many of which are uncontrollable. Planning is important in making decisions for the effective use of resources (Cope, 1987). Finally, planning provides a proactive approach to anticipating changes and responding to new opportunities and challenges (McCune, 1986).

In general, the function of institutional research is to inform the planning process by providing decision-makers with the information they need to make good decisions. This means that institutional researchers must be in touch with the internal and external issues which affect the institution in order to design research projects which address the issues clearly and effectively. If research is not relevant to the current and future issues facing the institution it may not be very useful in the planning process, even though it might reveal some interesting information (CACC Commission on Research, 1988). Institutional research provides answers to the following questions: "Where are we now?;" "What are the internal and external factors affecting the institution?;" and "What are the implications for the future?" Good outcomes research can provide information which is useful to "take the temperature" of the institution by

answering these questions: "How are we doing?" and "Are we doing what we intended to do?"

How does futures research relate to the goals and functions of research and planning? The literature of planning widely advocates the notion that change is the one constant that can be depended upon, and that institutional research and environmental scanning must focus on anticipated changes if it is to be useful in planning activities (Cope, 1987; McCune, 1986; Patterson et al., 1986). Ideally, planning should be proactive in meeting the challenges and opportunities of the future. Futures research provides one process for forecasting and developing information about the future which can inform the planning process.

Morrison, Renfro, and Boucher (1984) note that "we can know nothing with absolute certainty about the future. But we can know, in a weaker sense, a great many useful things about the future" (p. 1), including demographic projections, economic trends, and timing of events which may have an impact such an elections, contracts expiring, or the life expectancy of equipment. Futures research leads to forecasting, which takes into account potential events and acknowledges some uncertainty. Some decision-makers might argue that if it is not possible to predict the future with reliability, why bother (Nanus, 1989)? Although some may be skeptical about their accuracy, forecasts can provide information which "helps us to improve our current performance so that we can achieve a better future than would otherwise occur" (Morrison, Renfro, and Boucher, p.3). Futures research can be used to provide information which will help to inform planners as they consider the question, "What should we do now to avoid the forecast catastrophe?"

Forecasting can be valuable under the following conditions: if it is communicated to the relevant decision-makers; if the decision-makers believe the forecast; and if there are resources available to act on the information provided by the forecast. Forecasting can be "articulated, discussed, debated, evaluated, challenged, changed, modified, and used" (Morrison, Renfro, and Boucher,p. 4) by institutions to provide the best information about the future in order to make plans to cope effectively with change.

More than simply "coping" with change, decision-makers who are aware of the forecasts and

the possible scenarios for the future can look at the possibilities of the future in a more creative and positive way. John W. Gardner (1990) says that great leaders help people to believe in themselves and in the possibilities for the future by providing "breathtaking goals". One example is President John F. Kennedy's announcement that we would put a man on the moon within the decade. Burt Nanus (1989) believes that a leader who is creative about the future not only imagines the preferred future, but works to create it. The "preferred future" can be effectively used to convince those who may be resistant to change the positive outcomes which can be achieved by addressing future changes rather than by simply "letting them happen."

Although futures research can provide colleges with information which may be used to respond effectively and positively to future challenges, would the research actually be used? In a "rational" organization the answer would be "yes." But in institutions of higher education, which, as organizations, tend be "organized anarchies" with "political" attributes, it would be incorrect to assume that the information gathered through futures research would automatically be used. Barth (1985) notes that most researchers assume that practitioners will welcome new knowledge and put it to use in the field. However, it is important to realize that research results must compete with firmly-held beliefs and practices which have been around for a long time. Decision-makers may choose to discredit forecasts produced through futures research, particularly if the forecasts are unpleasant or vastly different from the current reality. Benveniste (1989) states that futures-oriented planners must understand the political process of planning. Those who want their plans to be implemented and to make a real difference for the institution must gather support from all parts of the institution by identifying individuals who are opinion leaders and change agents. Through the positive influence of a critical mass of supporters, futures research in planning has a much better chance for success.

The Relationship of Human Response with Change and Decision-making.

Because planning almost inevitably results in some changes, decision-makers who are involved in the planning process must understand the nature of change before starting the planning process so that the planning process might directly address the change process and

potential resistance to change.

Resisting Change. In 1970, Alvin Toffler's Future Shock provided an exciting, if somewhat frightening, view of the future. It is interesting to look back on his book twenty years later because Toffler's theories of rapid change may provide a better understanding of resistance to change. Toffler defined "future shock" as "the dizzying disorientation brought on by the premature arrival of the future" (p. 11). According to Toffler, the majority of people, even those who intellectually understand the rapid acceleration of change, find the idea of change so threatening that they attempt to deny its existence. Toffler stated,

> "Future shock is a time phenomenon, a product of the greatly accelerated rate of change in society. It arises from the superimposition of a new culture on an old one. It is culture shock in one's own society. But its impact is far worse. For most Peace Corps men, in fact most travelers, have the comforting knowledge that the culture they left behind will be there to return to. The victim of future shock does not" (p. 11).

In the same way that a traveller might prepare for a trip to a foreign country to minimize "culture shock," Toffler recommends that people prepare for "future shock" by developing a stronger future-consciousness which focuses on the social and personal implications of the future. In an analysis of the willingness of people to adapt to innovations, Rogers (1983) determined that only 2.5 percent of the population may be considered "innovators:" those who initiate changes or are the first to take advantage of innovations. Another 13.5 percent of the population may be considered "Early Adopters," who are followed by the next 34 percent of the population as the "Early Majority." In summary, this means that only a small percentage of people are likely to respond positively to change immediately, and only half are likely to be willing to adjust to change at all. Keller (1983) agrees that " a college's leading people need to be psychologically prepared for faster change, for new ventures, for zesty initiatives (p.129)."

Do the members of the institution actually want to respond to the rapid changes going on around them? Given the demographic realities an older college faculty, it is likely that the majority "remember" a simpler, happier time in which life was more stable, and changes occurred at a more leisurely pace. Often those who have been with an institution for a significant period of time favor traditional ways of doing things and view change as threatening.

This is evident in articles which appear with regularity in The Chronicle of Higher Education, bearing the following headlines: "At Brandeis U., an Intense Debate Over How to Keep Its Traditional Identity" (Leatherman, 1990); and "Stronger Push for Research on Liberal-Arts Campuses Brings Fears That Their Culture Is Threatened" (Heller, 1990). Whether or not a period of stability ever actually existed, it is probably safe to say that many college faculty and administrators are overwhelmed by change, and are likely to resist more change.

Senge (1990) explains that change can sometimes occur when the current realities become intolerable: "the more we abhor what is, the more 'motivated' we are to change" (p. 154). On the other hand, when there are no problems, individuals are motivated to change in order to create something new. Senge provides an explanation for this apparent paradox: "People don't resist change. They resist being changed" (p. 155). According to Senge, resistance to change develops when there is a threat to established norms and procedures. Institutional norms are usually entrenched in the power relationships, so when norms are challenged, the power structure is also challenged. The potential for a shift in power is often the cause of resistance to change. Senge recommends that leaders who wish to institute changes must find the root of the resistance by focusing on institutional norms and the power relationships in which the norms are embedded.

Coping with Change. Anticipating change and finding the roots to resistance to change are only the first steps in coping with change. In analyzing responses to change, psychologist William Bridges (1980) explains that each life change, or "transition," involves a three-step process in this order: an ending, a period of confusion and distress, and a new beginning. Bridges notes that there is a distinct difference between those who make a conscious decision to make a change, and those for whom change is unplanned and unwanted. The people who decide to make a positive change in their lives by moving to a new home, getting married, having a baby, or taking a new job, tend to deny the "ending" phase. They may feel that by admitting that the ending was painful they would also be admitting that the change was a mistake. One very happy new mother finally realized the source of her distress, "It seems to me that I crossed some kind

of threshold in my life, and there's no going back. My old life is gone" (p.11). On the other hand, those who are forced into a change which is not of their choosing, such as being fired from a job or coping with the death of a family member, had no trouble recognizing the ending. However, they usually had trouble dealing with the "new beginning" phase because they could only see the negative side to the change. Bridges notes that it is important for those going through changes to recognize the three phases of a transition, and to understand that it is essential to let go of the old situation before launching forth with a new beginning. It is also important to anticipate that the period in between the "ending" and the "new beginning" will be a difficult time which may involve reevaluation or even grieving before starting a new beginning.

Embracing Change. President of Herman Miller Company, Ed Simon, explains, "Embracing change does not mean abandoning a core of values and precepts. We must balance our desire for continuity with our desire to be creative. We must learn how to not abandon that core, while simultaneously letting go of past ways of doing things" (Senge, 1990, p. 349).

In his recent book, The Human Career, anthropologist Walter Goldschmidt (1990) argues that change, not stability, is the normal condition of society. Goldschmidt believes that social institutions "derive from the actions of individuals; institutional patterns respond to the recurrent needs and desires of the persons who make up the society" (p.206). According to Goldschmidt, individuals are adaptable not only because of their intelligence and problem-solving skills, but also because of their ability to collaborate. Collaboration suggests the ability to have some control over change in order to adapt and adjust to change. Group processes can greatly enhance the response to change in an organization. Senge (1990) advocates a collaborative approach to coping with change through "team learning." Team learning is at the heart of the "learning organization:" "a place where people are continually discovering how they create their reality and how they can change it" (p. 13). Because the intelligence of a team often exceeds the intelligence of the individuals in the team, small group teams can discover insights not attainable individually (p.10). Keller (1983) also notes the importance of involving leading people in the creation of strategies which respond to change. If there is

political resistance to change, a consensus must be reached before new strategies may be implemented. Patterson (1986) also advocates a team approach to problem-solving. Problem-solving teams use the expertise of participants, and also develop and educate team members through their participation (p. 75).

A group process might be used in which decision-makers and campus leaders work together to develop scenarios which provide a range of possible futures for the institution. Through this process, institutional leaders have an opportunity to think about the future and the implications of the future for the institution (Whiteley, Porter, Morrison, & Moore, 1990). The use of a group process to develop scenarios has three major benefits: first, the futures research is used as the basis for the development of scenarios; second, those who participate in the group process learn more about the future and about the planning process through their participation; and third, some of the apprehension about changes in the future may be resolved if participants are actively involved in developing solutions.

If a group process is used to develop scenarios, the group process should also be used in a collaborative approach to planning and decision-making in the institution. Participants will feel empowered by the process of embracing change only if they feel that their input will make a difference in the future direction of the institution.

Futures Research and Decision-making. How can futures research help members of an institution to cope with change and even embrace change in order to facilitate planning and decision-making? First, futures research can provide members of the institution with an opportunity to recognize the "endings" referred to by Bridges. By recognizing the endings, institutions will be able to cope with the period of confusion which precedes a new beginning. However, it is important to note that it is more difficult to come to terms with endings when the futures research produces a future which is not perceived as a desirable one for the institution. Second, futures research can provide members of an institution with information to prepare for the future in order to minimize the debilitating effects of "future shock" described by Toffler. Finally, futures research can provide a means for individuals to collaborate in planning for the

future in order to feel as if they have more control over the changes that are likely to occur. It is possible that individuals or groups who are resistant to change may respond more positively if they realize that change is normal, and that it is possible to address change positively by collaborating with others in a proactive approach to planning to meet new challenges.

Futures Research for Community College Issues

According to the American Association for Community and Junior Colleges (AACJC), the mission of community colleges is to "serve the broad public interest by providing access to quality higher education" (AACJC, 1990). A recent survey of faculty in higher education revealed that community college faculty have the clearest sense of mission of any of the sectors: their interests lie primarily in teaching, and they believe that teaching effectiveness should be the primary criterion for faculty promotion (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1990). Dr. Ernest Leach, Vice-Chancellor for Economic Development and Vocational Education in the California Community Colleges states, "The real task of vocational education is to prepare the workforce of California. . . . [History] will judge us on whether or not we serve our communities. That was the mission of the community colleges initially. I see much of what we're doing with our training for business and industry as a refocus on some of our original purpose as a community college" (Academic Senate for California Community Colleges, December 1990). K. Patricia Cross (1989) believes that "the challenge for community colleges in the coming years will be to balance flexibility and responsiveness to social change with institutional integrity and continuing commitment to the communities which they serve."

Although the open access, teaching, and community service missions of community colleges are clear, there are many new issues facing community colleges today which make it more difficult to achieve success in these missions. One way to ascertain the potential impact of the issues facing community colleges is by using futures research to examine the current situation and to provide projections for the future which may be used in the planning process.

The following list shows the variety of issues facing community colleges today. Although community colleges are facing some difficult issues all over the country, some of the most

dramatic issues are seen in California: a state with a rapidly growing population, and, with 107 community colleges, the largest community college system in the country.

Futures research may be used for each issue to attempt to reach answers to three questions: "What impact has this issue had on the institution already?"; "Is it likely that this issue will continue along current trends in the future?"; and "What impact is this issue likely to have on the institution in the future?"

Societal Trends. Many concerns have been expressed about the quality of skills of the present and future workforce. There are shortages of young, skilled entry-level workers (Morrison, 1990). In 1989, 30 percent of large companies offered remedial education for their employees (United Way, 1990). Fifty percent of all American young people do not continue on to college (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1985). About half of all service workers will be involved in collecting, analyzing, synthesizing, structuring, storing, or retrieving information (Cetron, 1988). Job growth is increasing at the greatest rate in the service sector (United Way, 1990). By 2000, workers will typically make three career changes and seven job changes during a lifetime (AACJC, 1988).

The population is getting older, and life expectancy is increasing (Morrison, 1990). At the same time, the population of young ethnic minorities is growing (Hodgkinson, 1990). Minorities will make up an increasing share of new entrants to the labor force: 29 percent between now and 2000 (Johnston and Packer, 1987). Nationally, community colleges enroll 35 percent of all college students, but enroll 47 percent of all college students who are ethnic minorities (Chronicle, 1989, 4, 11).

The entering college freshman class of 2000 is currently eight years old. Nationally, 24 percent live below the poverty line, more than 45 percent will be raised by a single parent before they reach the age of eighteen, nearly one fifth were born out of wedlock, one third are ethnic minorities, and the most have mothers who work outside the home (Hodgkinson, 1986).

Many economic reports say that a new recession is coming or has already begun. During previous periods of recession and high unemployment, community college enrollment has gone

up. However, with a shortage of younger workers for entry-level positions, enrollment could decline (Levine, 1989).

Issues related to Community College Students. According to projections of existing school populations in California, community college student enrollment is projected to grow from 1.4 million to 1.9 million by 2005 (California Community Colleges Chancellors Office, 1990). In addition, the community college student population is changing in several ways. Nearly one of every ten students is enrolled in basic skills classes where student reading skills are below the ninth-grade level. (California Community College Chancellor's Office, 1989). Nationally, the average age of community college students is 28 (AACJC, 1990), and the percentage of part-time students has increased since 1980. (National Center for Education Statistics, 1988).

Issues related to Community College Faculty. Although community college faculty have recently been characterized as being fairly contented, the majority of faculty feel that too many underprepared students are entering community colleges (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1989, p. 18).

Nationally, the majority of community college faculty are white (National Center for Education Statistics, 1988). One fourth of the full-time faculty is eligible to retire now. In California, by 2000, nearly half of the community college faculty will have reached age 62, and seven out of ten will be age 55 or older (California Community College Chancellor's Office, 1989). A recent report by the California Post-Secondary Education Commission (CPEC) estimates that California community colleges will need to hire over 22 thousand full-time faculty members before 2005. About 56 percent will be hired to replace retiring faculty, and the rest will be needed to keep up with enrollment growth (Faculty Association of California Community Colleges, 1990). According to current national graduate school enrollment figures, it may be difficult to find new faculty, particularly in science and math (National Center for Education Statistics, 1988, p. 168-169).

Issues related to Resources. Resources for public higher education are shrinking as state and federal budget deficits grow. One of the greatest concerns of community college

administrators is adequate finances (Chronicle, 1989, p. 56). In California, recently-elected Governor Pete Wilson has stated that if there is a "dire fiscal emergency" he will suspend the provisions of Proposition 98, which guarantees the K-12 and community colleges a minimum percentage of the state budget (California Federation of Teachers, 1990). Although community college enrollments are growing in California, the state funding formula penalizes colleges which go over their enrollment cap (Opdyke, 1990). However, California's A.B. 1725 has resulted in additional funding to community colleges in order to implement a wide variety of improvements which include program improvements, staff development activities, and a program of student matriculation.

Issues related to Facilities and Technology. One of the greatest challenges confronting community college administrators is keeping up with the demand for facilities and new technology (Chronicle, 1989, p. 56). Five of the ten fastest growing careers between now and 2001 will be computer-related (Cetron, 1988). Many colleges have older buildings which need repair or remodeling to accommodate new needs (Helpern, 1987). Because of projected enrollment growth, California will need an additional 28 community colleges by 2005. (California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, 1990).

Issues of Accountability. Many states are demanding greater accountability for the outcomes of education at all levels of public education (Cetron, 1988). In California, community colleges are held accountable for their success with ethnic minority students, course completion rates, graduation rates and transfer rates to four year colleges (CACC, 1988).

Leadership to Prioritize Issues and Identify Research Tasks. The myriad of issues which affect community colleges is somewhat overwhelming, and could cause confusion in the planning process. But many of the issues, if taken alone, provide conflicting demands. For instance, the demand for more basic skills classes and greater accountability conflicts with the reality of dwindling resources. It is important to avoid the problem of becoming so bogged down in the study of individual issues that the whole view cannot be seen quickly (Cope, 1987). In using information provided through futures research, it is best to use a multivariate approach in

order to see the whole picture, recognizing that issues have impacts on each other.

Leaders must have a clear vision to prioritize issues and develop initial research tasks. Patterson (1986) recommends that leaders develop a cohesive vision to avoid collecting a random set of information about the internal and external issues which affect the institution. According to Patterson, leaders must develop foresight to sense the future, hindsight to understand the history of the institution, depth perception to see the big picture, and peripheral vision to continue to be aware of "what's going on out there." Community college leaders should strife to strike a balance between the immediate internal concerns which have a direct impact on college operations and the external forces and future concerns to which community colleges must respond. College presidents should make the decision to focus on a few goals and issues so that the research questions and priorities may be directed more effectively (Pickett, 1984).

K. Patricia Cross acknowledges that although the multiple demands placed on community colleges make it difficult to develop a clear mission, it is important for campus leaders focus on one of five potential missions: 1) a comprehensive mission which attempts to meet all needs; 2) the transfer mission; 3) a mission of service to the local community; 4) an integrated focus which emphasizes a dataset approach to general education in order to produce liberally educated workers and citizens; 5) the remedial mission (Cross, 1985). Through a careful analysis of the internal and external strengths and weaknesses of the college, college presidents can have a clearer vision of the college mission.

Implementing the Futures Research Approach to Planning by Linking Planning, Research, and Professional Development. [See Figure 1.]

In order to implement futures research in planning, it is important to consider the links between planning, research, and professional development by taking the perspective of the College President: the ultimate decision-maker. After examining the institutional characteristics, it will be possible to consider the planning processes which might be used to introduce a futures research approach to planning.

Addressing the issue of change. It is difficult to address change in an institution if the

President is resistant to change. However, in colleges in which the President may be characterized as a "change agent," one who advocates and encourages change, many of the older faculty and administrators may be threatened by change. It could be the threat of a power shift, or simply the idea of letting go of the past that causes people to resist change. For this reason, it seems as if the first step in the planning process should be to provide all staff, faculty, and administrators with professional development activities which address the issue of change. One potential activity might be to create focus groups which discuss change in a positive light by addressing the question of "What would you like to see changed, given these forecasts?"

Through a greater awareness of their own responses to change, those who find change threatening may gain a better understanding of what is causing their resistance to change. General workshops could be held on the issues of change presented by Alvin Toffler and William Bridges. Other "futuristic" issues of a general nature could be introduced on a theme such as "Preparing for the Year 2000." If the issues of change and issues of the future are presented in a stimulating and positive manner through professional development activities, attitudes toward change may begin to be more positive.

In addition, workshops could be held on a variety of topics which are relevant to each segment of the campus. For instance, many faculty are frustrated that their students are less well prepared for academic work than ever before. Their teaching methods no longer appear to be as effective, and they are beginning to show the signs of burn-out. By discussing these issues with other faculty, and by learning about teaching methods which are effective for underprepared students, such as Classroom Assessment teaching techniques, faculty can feel more empowered as they cope with the changes in the student population.

Institutional Research. While the members of the institution are being prepared for coping with change, the Office of Institutional Research should continue to gather two types of data: a superficial environmental scan of the external and internal environments, and outcomes research. Although a complete environmental scan should be done at least once per year, it is also important for the Office of Institutional Research and the College President to continue to be

alert to any environmental changes which will have an impact on the institution. Institutional student outcomes data which is generally gathered for accountability to the state, including course completion rates, enrollment data, transfer rates, and graduation rates should be systematically reported on a semesterly basis. The need for additional outcomes research which goes beyond the state-mandated data can be determined through the planning process.

Reporting Research Results. It is important for the Office of Institutional Research to report the results of on-going research on environmental scanning and student outcomes in an expedient and timely manner, and in reports which are easy to comprehend and refer to. As a part of Professional Development, the results should be reported to all campus staff, including the College President, administrators, faculty, and staff.

Although brief written reports are important for later reference, a series of workshops or presentations may be even more effective as a part of the dissemination process. All members of the institution should be invited to participate in some type of group learning activity, whether it is in small workshops, large presentations followed by small group activities, or departmental meetings. It is critically important, however, that the "group learning activity" be designed around a topic which is relevant to the day-to-day work of the group for which it is designed. For instance, faculty are likely to be interested in research results which may help them to be more effective as teachers. Those who work in other capacities in the institution, as secretaries or support staff, will also be more likely to participate in activities which are relevant to their jobs rather than a simple reporting of research data.

Through a participatory team learning process, in which the research results are discussed and evaluated, members of the institution are likely to gain a better understanding of the issues. As a result, their professional development is enhanced. Moreover, these learning activities can also lead to community-building, which is important in a large institution.

Planning in Response to Research. After participating in the initial discussion and evaluation of the research data, a representative planning team, which should include the College President, can begin to work on a collaborative problem-solving process to address the

implications of the current issues raised by the environmental scanning data and the outcomes data. It will be important to address the issues which are currently stated as college goals as well as those listed above which are not. Should they become new college goals? Could any of the college goals be "replaced" if the goals have been met? What steps could be taken quickly to begin to meet some of the new and old issues? Which issues will require more long-range planning? Should the college even attempt to address all of the issues at once? Ultimately this problem-solving process will lead to recommendations to the College President for final decision-making.

Planning for Futures Research. In addition, the planning team should prioritize issues which are targeted for futures research. Although many community colleges currently have a comprehensive mission, by selectively choosing just a few issues for a more in-depth "futures" approach, the mission of the college may be ultimately more clearly defined. The planning team must clearly define the issues for study, and may need to work with the Office of Institutional Research in framing the questions to be addressed through futures research. Some of the issues listed earlier show some potential for futures research, including the issue of funding shortfalls and alternative funding sources which could develop in the future; the issue of adult and part-time students ; and the issue of faculty retirement (How many plan to retire? Where will new faculty be found?).

Futures Research. After helping the planning team to clarify the issues to be researched, the Office of Institutional Research should complete the research necessary to make forecasts which may be used in planning.

Reporting the Results of Futures Research. All staff, faculty, and administrators should be invited to participate in Professional Development activities in which the results of the futures research is explained, discussed, and evaluated.

Planning to Develop Scenarios. The planning team, and other relevant teams (such as departmental teams) should work together to develop scenarios for the future based on the forecasts developed through futures research. Through this process of discussing and

envisioning the future, participants will gain a better understanding of the issues of the future and will be more likely to embrace the changes which will be necessary to meet future needs. For instance, what are the implications for faculty retirement? If we knew, for instance, how many faculty were likely to retire next year, and in which departments, how could the institution respond? Are these hard-to-hire disciplines? Will the salary schedule or benefits need to be enhanced in order to attract new faculty? Are some potential new faculty currently in master's degree programs at local area universities? Ultimately, the scenarios which are developed should be passed on to the College President for decision-making purposes. Funding should be allocated to meet the new needs based on the decisions of the President.

The Role of the President in the Planning Process. Richardson and Rhodes (1988) recommend that college presidents "demonstrate their confidence in strategic planning through their willingness to participate and through being honest with participants" (p.299). It is important to note that with the exception of doing the research, the College President is involved in every step of the process. The President is continuing his own professional development through learning about the results of the research and by participating as a learner and as a resource person in the professional development activities. The President is a member of the planning team as they go through a collaborative problem-solving process. And the President must make the final decisions which are a result of the planning. However, Richardson and Rhodes recommend that college presidents indicate a "willingness to subordinate personal preferences . . . in resource allocation and in the generation of priorities" (p. 299). Faculty, staff, and other administrators often criticize the planning process if the president routinely overrules the outcomes of participative decision-making, either through directive or by withholding funding allocations. If the President honestly believes that the conclusions reached through the research and planning process are not in the best interest of the college, he will need to be honest to explain his reasons. However, if the President is an active participant in all phases of the Research -- Professional Development -- Planning process, his views and rationale will be well known.

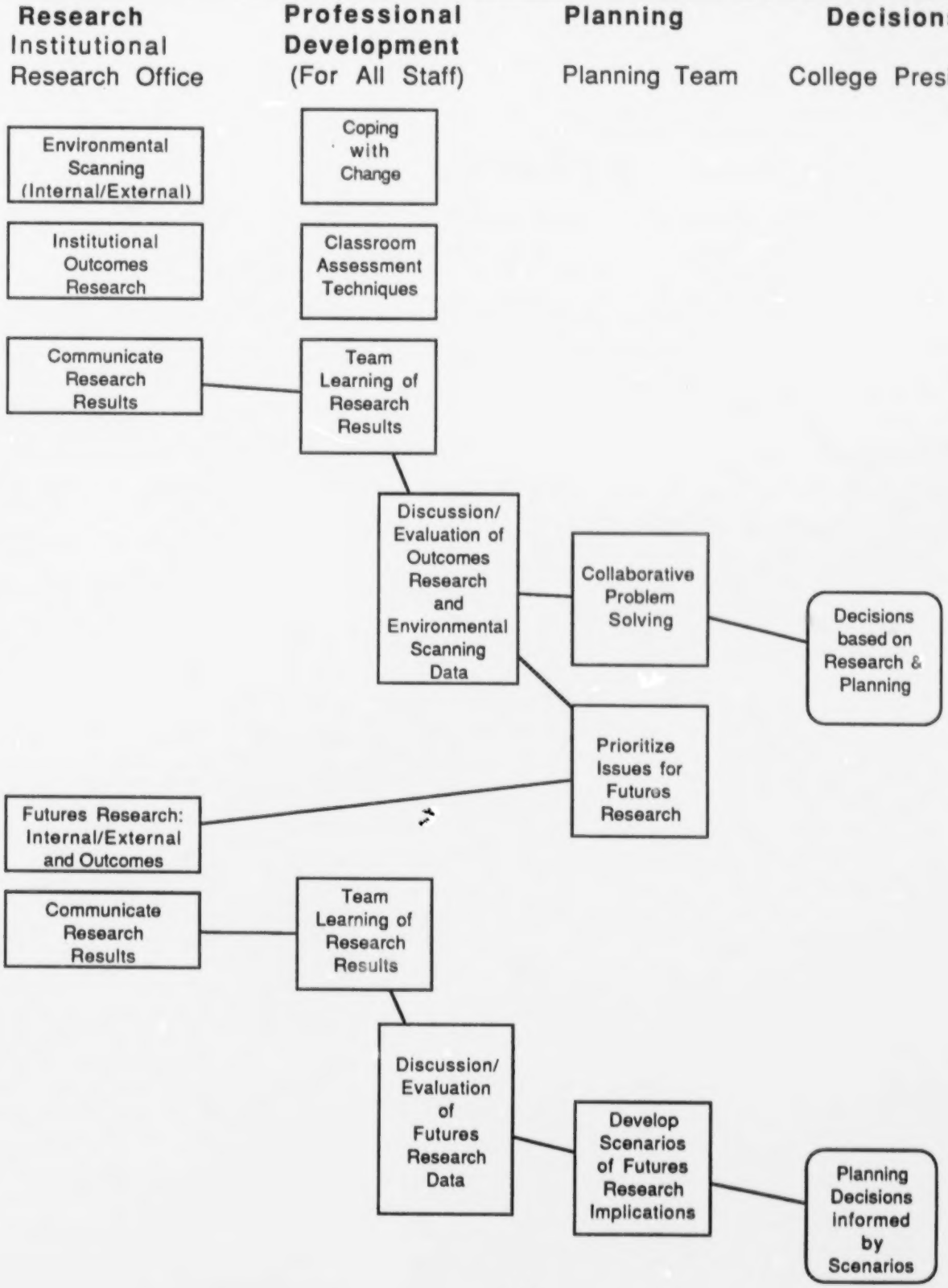
Conclusion: Avoiding the Deadly Sins of Planning by linking Futures Research with Professional Development

In A Guide for New Planners (Norris & Poulton, 1977), thirteen "deadly sins of reflexive planning" are outlined, many of which most colleges have already committed. However, colleges can begin a fresh approach to planning with an emphasis on the future. At the same time, by providing professional development which addresses the issue of change in the future, colleges can begin to cope with rapid change in a more positive and productive manner while avoiding the pitfalls of previous planning efforts.

Futures research addresses the importance of recognizing current realities and responding quickly to changes in the internal and external environment. The outcomes of planning should indicate responses to change, as well as willingness of the majority of the institutional members to respond to change. An integrated approach to planning which links Futures Research with Professional Development will continue to help institutional members to adjust to change through an ongoing process of learning and participating in the changes.

Figure 1

Linking Planning with Futures Research and Professional Development



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